

## News Release

### *Daphne Ecological Services Field Office*

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#### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Hosts Public Hearing for Beach Club West/Gulf Highlands Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

(Daphne, Ala.) – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will convene a public hearing on Monday, June 26, 2006, to receive public comments related to the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Beach Club West and Gulf Highlands condominium projects on the Fort Morgan Peninsula of Baldwin County, Alabama.

The hearing will take place at the Gulf Shores Adult Activity Center, 260 Clubhouse Drive, in Gulf Shores, Alabama, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Service biologists will be available between 6:30 and 7:00 p.m., to answer questions about the EIS. The formal hearing will begin at 7:00 p.m.

The Service published the document as a draft for public comment on April 28, 2006. The draft EIS was prepared to fully evaluate the potential impacts to the human environment as the Service considers possible reaffirmation of the Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) issued to the developers of the two condominium projects in April 2002. The EIS assures that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements to assess the significance of the proposed project on environmental factors have been fully met. The public comment period closes on July 27, 2006.

Under the Endangered Species Act, an Incidental Take Permit may be issued if, after an opportunity for public comment, it is determined that: any taking of a threatened or endangered species will be incidental; the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking; the applicant will ensure that adequate funding for the habitat conservation plan will be provided; and the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild. These are the issuance criteria used by the Service.

You can request a copy of the draft EIS by phone at 404-679-4144, by fax at 404-679-7081, by e-mail at [aaron\\_valenta@fws.gov](mailto:aaron_valenta@fws.gov), or by mail at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Southeastern Regional Office, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30345.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.